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History book club discussing state's haunted locations

PIERRE, S.D. -- South Dakota has almost as many haunted locations as there are signs for Wall Drug.

That's according to Chad Lewis, co-author of *The South Dakota Road Guide to Haunted Locations*.

Those attending the October meeting of the History and Heritage Book Club will learn about some of those haunted locations. *The South Dakota Road Guide to Haunted Locations* is the book club selection for October. Ron Lutz of Pierre will join the group in person to share his tales of unexplained sights and sounds, while Lewis will talk to the book club via telephone.

"With Halloween coming up, this is the perfect time to hear ghost stories and read about ghosts," said Patricia Miller, president of the South Dakota Heritage Fund. "Both Lutz and Lewis should have great ghost stories to tell. And people are welcome to share their own ghost stories."

The Heritage Fund is the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society and, along with the SDSHS Press, sponsors the book club.

The History and Heritage Book Club will meet at 7:30 p.m. CDT on Thursday, Oct. 13, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Everyone is welcome to attend the free meeting.

Lewis, who lives in Minneapolis, Minn., has been a paranormal researcher for more than 15 years. Paranormal is defined as psychic or mental phenomena outside the range of the normal.

With Terry Fisk, Lewis has written *The Road Guide to Haunted Locations* book series.

The book contains information about 52 sites in the state. For each site, there is a photograph and information about the site's history and what people have experienced that led them to believe the location is haunted.

In order for a location to be included in the book, it had to have a long history of reports, there had to be many people who had witnessed unusual activities, and there had to be current activity.

"We usually don't go into it saying if a place is haunted," Lewis said. "We let the reader decide."

By writing the book, Lewis said that he and Fisk wanted to document stories that people sometimes had not shared with anyone in years and would have taken to the grave. They also wanted people to explore and learn the history of different places throughout South Dakota that are listed in the book.

"A lot will read it in their favorite chair, but to me, the book should be taken on a road trip," Lewis said. "It's about adventure. We've had people say they went and didn't see anything, but they had a real great time."

Lutz is one person who has seen and heard things for which there seems to be no explanation. He would often hear footsteps and doors being slammed in The Flame Room, the Pierre nightclub he owned in the 1970s. He has seen the shadowy figure of a woman in the Grand Opera House in Pierre, where he has been involved in plays as an actor and director.

The South Dakota Road Guide to Haunted Locations is available at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and at the Capitol.

For more information about the book club meeting, call (605) 773-6006.

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The South Dakota Heritage Fund is a private charitable nonprofit that seeks funding to assist the South Dakota State Historical Society in programming and projects to preserve South Dakota's history and heritage for future generations.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.